

you. Debts on your children, debts on your grandchildren, and a blind eye to what is happening and what the Iraqi people want.

What kind of leadership is that? You think I like standing up here and getting into this kind of debate? No, I do not. But I have never seen anything like this since the Vietnam war, folks. I lived through those years. That was the reason I got into politics, so we would not make this mistake again.

Senate Democrats are providing real leadership. Do we all agree every inch of the way? No. But I predict to you, at the end of this vote, tomorrow, Republicans will be firm for the status quo, and Democrats will be for changing the mission, changing the dynamic. And that is going to be important for the American people to know.

As I said, redeploying our troops is smart and strategic, and here is why. Again, it is smart and strategic because the Iraqis must stand up to the job of providing security for their own people. My goodness, that is what countries do, folks. That is what countries do. We did it. Yes, we had people help us in the Revolution. By the way, France was one of those countries. But when the fighting was over, we had the boots on the ground. The Iraqi people have to stand up. They have to want democracy as much as we want it for them.

And I will tell you, we should start concentrating on the war against terror. My friends on the other side blend it all together. They blend it all together. But I have already proven to you there was not one al-Qaida cell in Iraq on 9/11. The State Department's own documents show it. There were more al-Qaida cells in America than there were in Iraq. But our presence there is fueling the insurgency completely.

Let me tell you what Peter Bergen has stated. He is an expert. He is an expert on terrorism. He has written books about it. He says this:

What we have done in Iraq is what bin Laden could not have hoped for in his wildest dreams: We invaded an oil rich Muslim nation in the heart of the Middle East, the very type of imperial adventure that bin Laden has long predicted was the United States' long term goal in the region. We deposed the secular socialist Saddam, whom bin Laden has long despised, ignited Sunni and Shia fundamentalist fervor in Iraq, and have now provoked a defensive jihad that has galvanized jihad minded Muslims around the world. It's hard to imagine a set of policies better designed to sabotage the war on terrorism.

Now, I have spoken with many generals and military experts who agree that our long-term presence in Iraq is counterproductive. They tell us that our continued presence will continue to breed terrorists not only in Iraq but throughout the world.

Now, I want to show you, as I wind down this speech, how the Iraqi people now feel about our presence. The Brookings Institution revealed this poll. It was just printed in the press a

few days ago. If this does not tell the story, nothing does.

Eighty-seven percent of the Iraqis support a timeline for U.S. redeployment. Eighty-seven percent of the Iraqi people want us out of there and want a timeline specifically. By the way, this is one thing that unites all the groups there. Sixty-four percent of the Kurds want a timeline for U.S. redeployment. Ninety percent of the Shias want a timeline for U.S. redeployment. Ninety-four percent of the Sunnis want a timeline for U.S. redeployment.

So you tell me how it makes sense, at a time when we are learning that the Iraqis, whom we are training, have, in at least two cases we know about, turned against our soldiers, who are risking their lives—shot them in cold blood. For what? They are there to help the Iraqi people, and they are being killed.

I have to say that the status quo is leading us deeper and deeper into a place we don't want to be as a country. The American people want an exit strategy. An exit strategy is not cut-and-run; it is smart and strategic. The status quo is more of the same. How many more times will we come down here and talk about beheadings? How many more times will we come down? How many more deaths will it take until finally we say enough is enough?

That time, I hope, is coming. I think we are going to see votes on these two Democratic amendments that, when taken together, will indicate a real difference here between the parties.

Listen to what the Iraqi people are saying. Listen to what the American people are saying. Listen to what the world is saying. The views of the United States by people all over the world are going down. In the last year alone, favorable views of the United States dropped in Spain, from 41 percent to 23 percent approval; in Indonesia, from 38 percent down to 30 percent; in Turkey, from 23 percent to 12 percent; and in India—India is considered one of our best friends—it has gone from 71 percent down to 56 percent. This does not make us stronger in the world; it makes us weaker. This does not make us safer in the world; it makes us more vulnerable.

I believe in democracy. So let us look at what the Iraqi people are telling us they want. They want a timeline and want us out. Let's listen to the generals who have told us that our long-term presence is fueling the insurgency and we need to get out. Let's listen to the American people who are wise and love our troops and say it is time for an exit strategy.

Folks, we are paralyzed. We are paralyzed here. It is like we are in a hole and we can't get out. Well, I say today is the day to start climbing out of that hole. Senate Democrats have proposed two ways to change the dynamics here in this war.

I plan to vote aye for the Kerry-Feingold-Boxer amendment. It speaks to me as something that will work for us.

It is strategic. It is wise. It is smart. I will also vote for the Levin amendment because it moves us in the right direction. It shakes up the mission into something that makes sense. It changes the mission. It starts bringing our troops home and starts to redeploy them.

So my feeling is, the status quo is a disaster. It is a disaster. Let us open our eyes to the truth. Can you imagine how I felt when I got a call in my office by a woman who couldn't find out the truth about who killed her son? And the military had completed its investigation, and they knew her son was killed by the very same Iraqi soldiers whom he was training. And they kept it a secret? They kept it a secret until today from that woman. I have to say, why? Is it because they are fearful that when the American people learn of this, the support for this war will plummet even further? I don't know the answer to that question. But so far, I have no good answers. It worried me with Mr. Tillman, Patrick Tillman, in Afghanistan, when they said he was killed by the enemy, and the parents pressed on and pressed on, and it turned out to be friendly fire.

I am telling you, my colleagues, this is a turning point for us as individual Senators. I hope we have the courage to say no to the status quo, support the Kerry-Feingold-Boxer alternative, and also support the Levin alternative because they both shake it up and say, once and for all, we need to talk about an exit strategy. In the end, that is going to be the road for success.

Thank you very much, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from West Virginia.

MR. BYRD. I thank the Chair.

MR. PRESIDENT, today the Senate is debating two amendments on Iraq. The first amendment has been offered by Senator LEVIN. It is a nonbinding sense of the Congress that clearly illustrates that there must be a change in our policy toward Iraq. It states that it is neither in the American nor the Iraqi interest to maintain an open-ended commitment of large numbers of our troops.

Some may challenge this idea and stubbornly maintain that we must stay the course, no matter the cost or the consequences. I would point these critics to the op-ed which appeared in the Washington Post on Tuesday, June 20, 2006, written by Iraq's National Security Adviser. Here is what he said: "The eventual removal of coalition troops from Iraqi streets will help the Iraqis, who now see foreign troops as occupiers rather than the liberators they were meant to be" and that "the removal of foreign troops will legitimize Iraq's government in the eyes of its people."

The distinguished Senator from Michigan, Mr. LEVIN, has crafted a good amendment which I will support. We need a change in our Iraq policy.